[Monday 23 of December 1700]

Dr. Davenant's

OPINION

Anent the

Salt and Malt-Taxes

IN

ENGLAND.

(1700)

THE Doctor in his Eſſay, upon the probable Methods of making People Gainers in the Ballance of Trade, Printed *Anno* 1700, after enumerating ſeveral Taxes, and giving his Opinion anent the dangerous Conſequences of heavy Impoſitions on Trade, ſayes *page* 95, 96. and 97. That, during all the War, there has been levied here great Sums every Year, and many of the forementioned Funds are to continue ſo long, that it will be ſeveral years before our Annual Payments can be conſiderably diminiſhed, and there is ſuch a Difference between a Twentieth, and an Eighth or indeed a Twelth Part (which yet we ſhall not come to in ſome time) as muſt inevitably affect the Nation's Trade and the whole Body of its People.

When their was raiſed no more than about a Twentieth Part, there were great Sums of Money to circulate in Foreign Traffick, and to Imploy in enlarging our Home-manufactures, which two Fountains of our Wealth muſt be dry, when the Springs, which hitherto fed them, are diverted and let into another Channel.

There is ſcarce any of theſe new Revnues which do not give Trade a deſperate wound; the Additional Duties on Beer, and Ale, and the Tax upon Malt, are apparently a Burden upon the Woollen Manufactures, affecting the Carder, Spinner, Weaver and the Dyer, who all of them muſt be raiſed in their Wages, when the Neceſſaries of Life are raiſed to them. The Conſequences of which will be, that our Woollen Goods muſt come at a Heavy and Diſadvantageous Price into the Foreign Mercats.

There is no Man will pretend, that high Cuſtoms are not pernicious to our Commerce Abroad. A Nation is not Gainer in the general Ballance of Trade, by the Dealing of a few, who are able to Imploy in it great Stocks, ſuch may make to themſelves an immenſe Gain, but they go but a little toward Inriching the whole Publick, which ſeldom Thrives, but when in a manner the Univerſal People bend their Thoughts to this Sort of Buſineſs, when every one is ready with his ſmall Stock and little Sum, to venture and rove about the World; of theſe ſome proſper and others are undone: However in the way of Merchandiſe, Men who do not Thrive themſelves, may yet contribute very much to make their Country Rich, which gets by the Dealings of all, and does not ſuffer by the unfortunate Conduct of here and there a Merchant. But when the Cuſtoms are high, all theſe Undertakers, who all along in *England* have made up the chief Bulk of our Trading Men, muſt hold their hands, tho in Skill, Induſtry, Intentive Parts, and Witt, they may exceed Merchants of more Wealth and

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of a higher Rank. Nor is it indeed practicable for Men of but a Moderate Fortune to deal at all, when more than triple that Sum is necessary to have ready now to pay the King, which formerly would have set up a Substantial Trader, and maintain him in sufficient Business.

But of all the new Impositions, none are so dangerous to the very Being of Trade, nor so hurtful to all its Parts and Members, as the high Duties lately laid upon Salt. First, They affect the Common People in the whole Course of their Living, whose chief Nourishment is Bacon and other Salted Flesh, so that this Excise has an universal Influence upon all Manufactures whatsoever. But the general Prejudice it may bring to Navigation, is yet of a higher Consequence.

Page 100, *he says*, Reckoning long and short Voyages together, the principal Expense of fitting out a Trading Vessel, is Drink and Meat. The Excise and Duties upon Malt, without doubt, make Drink sufficiently Dear to the Fraughter. And the Duty upon Salt, makes Victualling a very heavie Burden upon him; all which must end, in lessoning our Navigation from time to time, for undoubtedly Foreigners observing, how dear Freight is with us, will Trade in their own Ships as much as possible.

In Barrelling up Beef and Pork, we heretofore made Use of *St. Martines's*, *&c.* or *Oleron* and *English* Salt mixed together; and with these Materials the Flesh was best prepared, both for Wholsomeness and long Keeping, our own Salt without Mixture being Fiery, Corrosive, and very Scorbutick. As we are informed, the *St. Martins* and worser sort of *French* Salt, from 1676 to 1688 was delivered in *London* at about 2 *l*: 5 *sh*: *per* Tun, and fourty Bushels to the Tun, and that from *Oleron* from 2 *l*: 10 *sh*: to 2 *l*: 15 *sh*: *per* Tun. But now the very Duty for 40 Bushels of *Oleron* Salt amounts to 13 *l*: 6 *sh*: 8 *d*: beside the 25 *per Cent ad valorem*, of which formerly the

Prime

Prime Coſt came to but 2 *l*: 15 *ſh*: at higheſt. The Duty likewiſe upon 40 Buſhels of *Lisbon* Salt comes to 13 *l*: 6 *ſh*. 8 *d*. of which the Prime Coſt was formerly at higheſt but 3 *l*· 10 *ſh*: And as to our *Newcaſtle* and *Limington* Salt, which is now generally made uſe of in Salting Beef and Pork for Trading Veſſels, the very Duty for 40 Buſhels amounts to 6 *l*: 13 *ſh*: 4 *d*: which before the War the Prime Coſt came but to 3 *l*: at the deareſt Mercat. In ſo much, that we are credibly informed, that a Merchant can Store himſelf in *Ireland* with Salt Beef and Pork ready Packed up, almoſt as cheap, as he can Buy the Salt in *England*.

So that for long Voyages, the Merchant will either victual in *Ireland*, or ſalt his Beef and Pork on ſome Foreign Coaſt, as he ſails along, where Proviſions ſhall be cheap: which muſt be a great Damnage to the Landed Intereſt here: Or if he does not ſo, Victualling will be ſo Expenſive to him, as to make Fraught much dearer than ought it to be in a Country that expects to thrive by Trade.

The Conſequence of all which will be, That the Body of our Merchants muſt ly under a general Diſcouragement, they will neglect looking after National Gain, which *Engliſh* Merchants have perhaps heretofore as much conſidered in their Dealings, as any Trading Men in the whole Commercial World. They will have an Eye to nothing, but their own temporary Profit, & ſuffer Strangers to go away with thoſe Gains, which *England* was wont to make by Freight. From whence it will follow, That we muſt decay in our Stock of Shipping, and decreaſe every Year in the Brood of Sea-men; and when this happens, we muſt no more pretend to ſuch a Naval Strength, as hitherto has made us terrible to all our Neighbours.